

Title: Do social networks impact perceived loneliness in caregivers to older adults with chronic conditions?

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Over the last few decades, there have been numerous studies evaluating loneliness in healthy younger and older adults. However, few studies have examined loneliness among caregivers to older adults with chronic diseases and associations with social networks characteristics. Previous research has shown that some caregivers suffer from physical and mental health issues like depression and anxiety due to the stressful nature of providing daily care. Feeling lonely has negative health implications and may add to these health risks. Understanding the risk factors for loneliness among caregivers may provide insights into ways to improve caregiver well-being for those seeking support. Caregivers may experience variability in their loneliness due to factors such as amount of time spent caregiving, social support, and caregiver burden. This study aims to further investigate differences in loneliness between caregivers and non-caregivers and associations with social network characteristics. We predict caregivers will report lower loneliness scores because previous literature has demonstrated that informal caregivers have larger social networks and feel less lonely than non-caregivers. Additionally, caregivers tend to have more kin friendships in their social networks than non-caregivers. Caregivers with more kin support typically report less distress. The present pilot study will have informal (unpaid) caregiver and non-caregiver participants complete the UCLA Loneliness Scale, an interview assessing social network size and connections via the National Social Life, Health and Aging Project's (NSHAP) questionnaire, and a questionnaire measuring caregiving characteristics. This information will be used to map social networks, frequency of social interaction, and examine relationships with loneliness.